

Exhibit No. 1Date 4-11-13Bill No. HB 420

April 9, 2013

Members of the Legislative Body,

I am writing this letter in support of funding for the MT Department of Agriculture Food and Ag Development Centers. The staff at Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc. has been instrumental over the last several years in helping to grow our lamb production business. They have been there for us to provide timely assistance at critical points in our business decision-making process. Due to their efforts we have a better organizational and operating structure, a better understanding of our financing opportunities and financial statements, a new name and logo, an effective e-commerce marketing and sales website, other marketing materials, and a very positive outlook for the future of our company, Montana Natural Lamb.

On behalf of the lamb producers involved in our cooperative business effort, I commend the efforts of Beartooth RC&D and the work they do through the Food and Ag Development Center. Without their assistance, we would not be the business we have become and are today.

Sincerely,

Harv

Harv VanWagoner, Chief of Marketing, Sales and Operations
PO Box 1476
162 Old Boulder Road
Big Timber, MT 59011
(406) 932-5659 H
(406) 390-2740 C



118 E. Seventh St. Suite 2A Anaconda, MT 59711
ph: 406.563.5259 fx: 406.563.5476
<http://www.medamembers.org>

MEDA represents over 230 members, who are actively involved in local economic activity, community development, and job retention and job creation for Montana.

April 8, 2013

TO: Chairman Rick Ripley and Members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee

RE: HB 420 In Support of Montana Food and Agricultural Development Centers

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) stands in support of HB 420, to assist in funding Montana's Food and Agricultural Development Centers to maintain and build on our state's capacity to assist entrepreneurs in the area of food manufacturing, value-added agriculture and alternative energy.

Montana's Food and Agricultural Development Centers have a proven track record of success.

In FY2012, Food and Agricultural Development Center clients:

- Introduced 47 new products
- Started 19 new businesses
- Undertook 24 business expansions
- Created 41.5 new jobs and
- Leveraged over \$2 million in outside funding, over one-third from private sources

By ensuring that these Centers can continue to provide technical assistance to Montana's food and agricultural entrepreneurs, this bill will help Montana farmers, ranchers and small businesses retain a greater share of the billions of food and energy dollars Montanans otherwise send out of state. Montanans spend more than \$3 billion a year on food, but currently only about 10% of that money stays in Montana. Research confirms that the lack of a food processing and value-added agriculture infrastructure is a primary barrier preventing farmers and food entrepreneurs from succeeding with in-state markets.

These Centers hold tremendous potential for economic development in both urban and rural communities by ensuring that more of our state's food, agricultural and energy dollars circulate in Montana – revitalizing communities, improving access to healthier food for our citizens, and reconnecting our rural and urban economies.

Thank you for your support of HB 420.

For MEDA,

Tracy McIntyre, President

JOIN US AT <http://www.medamembers.org>

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* KELLIE DANIELSON, KALISPELL * KATHIE BAILEY, LEWISTOWN * PAUL TUSS, HAVRE *



February 5, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

As a rural Montana small business owner, I support your efforts to seek continued funding for the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Network.

Our business benefited from the technical assistance and capital resources provided by the Center at Beartooth RC&D. The Center's support provided us the opportunity to develop a marketing plan and an educational website for our rangeland integrated weed control business. This website allows us to serve Montana agricultural producers and Montana small landowners.

It is important to recognize that this network serves a vital role in the development of small agricultural businesses in our rural Montana communities. Please support the Ag. Center Network's funding request.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Harwood".

John Harwood
Harwood Enterprises Inc.



College of Technical Sciences

Gregory D. Kegel, Dean

February 11, 2013

To: Members of the House Agriculture Committee

Re: Support of the Food and Agriculture Development Centers

Dear Committee Members:

The BioEnergy Center at MSU-Northern fully supports sustaining the Food and Agriculture Development Centers. The emphasis of these Centers is in assisting producers in the complex and technical world of Ag production with a network of expertise that is readily available to a diverse Ag community.

The BioEnergy Center has had the opportunity to work with the Food and Ag Development Centers on numerous occasions concerning Agro Energy related projects. Our Center engages in research development in bio-fuel chemistry, bio-fuel performance, emissions, and oil seed production. Many of the clients we work with are either references or clients of the Food and Ag Development Centers that are seeking technical assistance. Our BioEnergy Center has been nationally recognized for its development of advanced bio-derived jet fuel and much of that success can be attributed to collaboration with the Food and Ag Development Centers. Agriculture is an economic engine in Montana's economy and the Food and Ag Development Centers play a very important support role to that sector. Please support the passage of HB420.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gregory D. Kegel'.

Gregory D. Kegel
Dean, College of Technical Sciences
Montana State University – Northern
Havre, Montana 59501

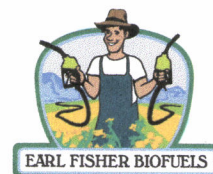
406-265-4156



Post Office Box 7751 • Havre, Montana 59501 • (406) 265-3740 • FAX (406) 265-3741

Member of the Montana University System • AA/EOE

Earl Fisher BioFuels
PO Box 386
Chester, MT 59522
406-759-5018



February 12, 2013

Members of the House Agriculture Committee
Montana House of Representatives
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairperson,

I am writing to support the funding request for the Food & Agriculture Development Centers (LC2036). I am an agriculture producer who is involved in developing a local value added market for oil seed by producing biodiesel. I see value added agriculture and specifically the bio-based industry as a key component to the future viability of my community and rural Montana.

The Food & Agriculture Development Center at Bear Paw Development in Havre has been a valuable team member to Earl Fisher BioFuels from the beginning. We would not have made as much progress without the support, encouragement and expertise of the staff at the Food & Agriculture Development Center at Bear Paw Development.

It is without hesitation that I urge your strong support to secure funding for the Food & Agriculture Development Centers (LC2036).

Best Regards,

Brett Earl

Brett Earl
Partner
Earl Fisher Biofuels
406-759-5018



1445 N. Broadway
PO Box 2278
Red Lodge, MT 59068
Phone: 406.446.4607 fax: 406.446.4607
sam@redlodgeales.net

February 11, 2013

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of Joel Bertolino and Beartooth RC&D Food and Ag Center. Over the years, the RC&D has helped me obtain a USDA Rural Development Grant and a GTA mini-grant. Recently, RC&D has helped guide me through the GTA grant process. I am interviewing February 26th in Helena with the GTA's Development Council. I would not have known of these funding sources had it not been for Beartooth RC&D.

The RC&D has also scheduled brewery tours with various agricultural and business groups that are meeting in Red Lodge. This has helped spread the brewery's message around the state and allowed me to make contacts and network with people outside the brewery industry.

I hope you will continue to fund Beartooth RC&D Food and Ag Center.

Thank you,

Sam Hoffmann
President

To Whom it may Concern:

Have you ever had an individual care about everything you are doing? Or was willing to help you make a project that you loved work better, or listen to you to find out what your needs might be for a wonderful project! That is an amazing opportunity for you if you know someone willing to do those things for you!

Well I feel so fortunate to have someone like that on my team and his name is Joel! The Beartooth RC &D Food and Ag Center has given my business the support that I would not have expected from a governmental organization!

This is a program that without a doubt can help small business expand and assist in helping in so many ways!

Please contact me if you have any questions because I could brag all day about what a wonderful and helpful program this is.

In Good Health,

Katy Martin
Owner of the Longest Continually Open General Store in Montana.
Fishtail General Store

Re: Food and Agricultural Development Network Funding Request

Our business is a small bakery located in Bridger, MT which makes artisan pastries and breads utilizing as many local ingredients as possible. We have been in business three years now and have seen our business grow each year.

We would like to offer our support of the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Network's need for continued funding.

Our business has worked closely with the Food and Ag Development Center at Beartooth RC&D. The Montana Food and Ag Development Centers have been an integral provider of resources to our area in the delivery of technical assistance and resources to developing businesses. We believe the Food and Agriculture Center Network program should be one that has long-term sustainability.

Specifically the Beartooth Food and Ag Center has helped our business by assisting us with the writing of a USDA Rural Development grant for a marketing plan and for the development of a logo, website and business signage.

We have also found it difficult to keep pace with state food and safety updates and regulations due to there being no established website or central location for getting Health and Human Safety questions answered accurately and in a timely manner. Currently the process of calling the state DPHHS office for Howard Reid or our county sanitarian is a slow process due in part to both of their workloads not allowing for acceptable access to them for up to date information. We wish to stay in compliance with state food and safety regulations but believe a lack of centralized communication network makes it difficult to do. The food and safety guidelines adopted by the federal government are difficult to even find for small food businesses.

We would like to see a process by which when county sanitarians certify food businesses they collect a fee and present the business with the food and safety guidelines in hard copy or through a website that simplifies through categories so the regulations have less subjectivity. We would like to see someday a state and federally compliant database for certified food businesses to keep track of changes in their products contents information as it changes etc that could also send out emails when there are changes that affect them.

Sincerely,

Tim and Deb Zimbleman

Das Kuchenhaus Bakery

Bridger, MT 5901

THUNDERHEAD GARDENS

Local * Sustainable* From Seed to Sauce

Greetings!

Thunderhead LLC is an agricultural-innovative company that specializes in a value-added product, Thunderhead Raspberry Chipotle Sauce. We are located in Lake County, Montana. **I am writing you today in support of the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Center Program. Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (MMFEC) in Ronan, Montana, has been instrumental in my company's success.** MMFEC has provided key technical assistance in our pre-production planning , as well as the on-going actual production of our product. This assistance has included product testing, nutritional analysis, proper product labeling, and compliance with Federal food safety regulations. MMFEC has hosted educational classes that are pertinent to food processors that provide certification in food safety, which is so very important at this time, as well as classes in business planning and strategic marketing, which strengthen the potential for economic growth and success for small agricultural companies such as Thunderhead LLC. With the success of small food processing companies in Montana, our economy will become more viable and competitive with neighboring states. Thunderhead LLC purchases its main ingredients for its product from local farms, uses local businesses such as print shops, label companies, and trucking companies: thereby keeping money from sales of our product circulating in the LOCAL economy. Thunderhead LLC has a great appreciation for Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and **we could not have realized this business without their technical expertise and support.**

Sincerely,

Joel Carlson

President/Owner

Thunderhead LLC.



local is delicious!

Western Montana Growers Cooperative

P.O. Box 292

Arlee, MT 59821

(406) 726-4769 grower@wmgcoop.com – Wholesale Division

(406) 544-6135 csa@wmgcoop.com – Retail Division

Representative Rick Ripley,
Chair Senate Finance and Claims Committee
Montana State Capitol, 1301 E. 6th Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

RE: Please support HB 420 in support of Montana Food and Agricultural Development Centers

Dear Representative Ripley and Senate Finance and Claims Committee Members,

I am the general manager of the Western Montana Growers Cooperative (WMGC), which is a coalition of 40 small farms and ranches located throughout Western Montana. We provide marketing and distribution services to help our grower members sell their products to markets that would be difficult to reach on their own. On behalf of myself and our members, I ask that you support HB-420, which would provide continued funding for Montana's food and agricultural development centers.

Our organization owes much of its success to the aid of the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (MMFEC), a food and agricultural development center located in Ronan. In 2011 the MMFEC and our cooperative began a partnership that further expanded our marketing capabilities by processing and packaging many of our products, including chopped lettuce, cut carrots, and pre-skinned and cut potatoes. Since schools and other institutions don't have the time or facilities to process raw products, this partnership is key in accessing these larger institutional markets. In just the last year the MMFEC helped us sell approximately \$30,000 worth of products to Montana K-12 schools. Over the past two years, the MMFEC has processed roughly 40,000 pounds of food for us, bringing in about \$60,000 in revenue.

In addition to processing and freezing products, the MMFEC has provided us with technical assistance for labeling and food safety requirements. With their help I also attended a food hub conference in Chicago, Illinois. Discussions from this conference helped us expand our consumer supported agriculture (CSA) program. A Missoula hospital now offers our CSA shares as a health benefit for its employees, resulting in about \$46,000 of sales.

Our cooperative has been in existence for 10 years, grown to a staff of six, and grossed nearly a million dollars in sales last year. Very few farmer cooperatives are able to state those statistics. As a result of our partnership with the MMFEC we have been able to sell to larger markets and extend our financial season, bringing in steady income throughout the whole year. The development center's work has been invaluable to the continued growth of our business and has increased the viability of our 40 member farms and ranches. This success not only benefits our staff and members, but helps improve the infrastructure and markets for Montana food and keeps more money circulating in Montana's economy.

I thank you for your time and your support of HB-420, our local food system, and our economy.

Sincerely,

Dave Prather
General Manager



I am writing you to express my support of the Food and Agriculture Center Program. Just over one year ago I started a small safflower oil business on my family's farm southeast of Big Sandy. For the first month of our business we supplied safflower oil to non-food organizations (soap and skin-care products manufacturers primarily) in Montana. Shortly thereafter I received interest from several restaurants, food service companies, grocery and health food stores, and other kitchens within the state for cooking oil they could use in their food preparation. Knowing very little at the time about food manufacturing and processing I wasn't sure what I needed to do to be able to capture that demand. Food manufacturing was a different game than I had played before and I wanted to do it properly.

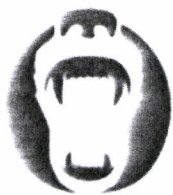
In my efforts to meet food-grade requirements I contacted the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center in Ronan for help on my labeling. They were able to answer my questions and provide me with the resources I needed to ensure my packaging met food standard requirements. I also got in touch with Bear Paw Development in Havre to discuss Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) training and shortly thereafter was able to get all of the information, guidance and answers to questions that I needed to develop my own food safety procedures.

In addition, the Food and Agriculture Center Program has also provided me with a stronger network into the food industry in Montana and through that network I've been able to capture the initial demand from food outlets and find additional markets for my safflower oil.

Without this help that I received from Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and Bear Paw Development through the Food and Agriculture Center Program my entry into this market would have been very difficult and my business could not have grown to where we are today. As a Montana business owner I urge you to continue to and expand your support for the Food and Agriculture Center Program, it is a true benefit to Montana businesses.

Sincerely,

Andrew Long
General Manager | The Oil Barn, LLC



OMNIBAR
EAT IT ALL

Subject: In support of the Food and Agriculture Center Program

Sir,

Over the last 24 months my company has developed a nutritionally balanced whole food bar that uses beef as the protein as opposed to soy or whey. With the help of the University of Montana, Montana State University, the American Cattleman's Beef Association, the USDA and the Montana Department's of Agriculture and Commerce, we've feel we've created something new and unique for the marketplace that will also be of support to agricultural communities of Montana.

Yet, for all our time and effort, not having the ability to develop our product and processes in a USDA inspected production facility could have been the end of us. At points in the beginning we struggled to find ways to approach the food science, production and regulatory requirements needed to successfully move forward. Seeking help, we contacted the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and during our initial conversations, Jan Tusick coached us in ways to get our idea off the ground. Months later we came back and the Center then helped prepare us for our initial production runs in Ronan. Thanks in great part to the Food and Agriculture Center Program, we're going into full production later this month.

As with any entrepreneur, I need to be able to use all my resources as effectively as possible to have a chance at success. Certain pieces of critical work, such as pilot production, require a lot of time, effort and money and so have to done with the greatest care and planning. Often it's impossible for a small producer or business to find a facility to work with, especially one that's USDA inspected. For my company, I needed to know how to get my product ready so when the time came for a very big commitment of resources, I'd have the greatest chance of success.

That's why I'm writing in support of the Food and Agriculture Center Program. Giving small producers and entrepreneurs the ability to work in an affordable, highly professional and knowledgeable facility can be the difference between success and failure. Please support the great work of the Food and Agriculture Center Program; it's given me the chance to succeed.

Thank You,

Cooper Burchenal



Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center

"Farm to Food - Cultivating Cooperatives & Entrepreneurs"

To: Rick Ripley- Senate Finance and Claims Committee Chair, and Committee members

Subject: Support for HB 420- Funding of the Food and Agriculture Center Program

Dear Committee Members,

Please consider this letter of testimony on HB 420, which establishes funding for the Food and Agriculture Center Network Program. The Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center is currently designated as a Food and Agriculture Center for the state. We serve a very unique role in that we house the only food processing facility in the region in which food entrepreneurs can access an inspected establishment for the development and production of their food products. Our facility is both USDA and FDA inspected and we serve clients statewide.

I understand the need to justify any state expenditure and therefore please allow me to share our centers accomplishments on the behalf of the program.

Over the past two years our center has assisted 80 food businesses in many stages of their development. Those businesses created 37 jobs and retained 107 jobs. Those businesses created 46 new products which are now sold in state and national markets. With our assistance \$201,000.00 were raised to assist the businesses in their development and expansion. Our favorite story is of the Western Montana Growers, a 37 producer member cooperative, has hit the \$1,000,000 in sales mark this past year!

Our center has brought several food safety trainings to the state to assist our food businesses and producers understand and meet the emerging federal food safety regulations. We, in collaboration with Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, are assisting businesses meet the demand of third party audits needed to enter national and international markets. Pasta Montana is one business that, with our assistance, is now certified in BRC (British Retail Consortium) Standards, which is recognized internationally as a Global Food Safety Initiative Audit.

HB 420 will continue a program that will support a network of centers that provide the necessary technical expertise to emerging food and agricultural enterprises and insure their success in a growing market for Montana made products.

Thank you for supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

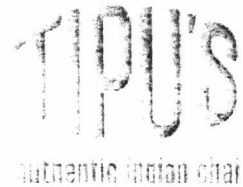
Jan Tusick

407 Main Street SW
Ronan, MT 59864

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F 406.676.5902

lakecountycdc.org

*This institution is
an equal opportunity
provider.*



I am writing as a small Montana food manufacturing business in support of the Food and Agriculture Center Program. Let me tell you a little of our history and why the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center has been so important to us.

We opened a restaurant in Missoula in 1997 and one of the things we served was a delicious spiced tea drink based on my partner's Indian grandmother's recipe called Chai. It became swiftly popular and local coffee shops and the UC Market on the UM campus asked us to make the chai for them to serve. We soon found that we could not manufacture it in the restaurant for this purpose and had to find a facility to help us make and develop the product. That is when we found the MMFEC. Conveniently located an hour's drive away, we received help from the MMFEC staff and resources in the following areas:

- Manufacturing and product development
- Raw materials sourcing
- Regulation and labeling approvals
- HACCP Plan training and assistance
- Financing assistance through Lake County Community Development including small business development loans and support through angel investing process
- SWOT Analysis
- Marketing

We have collaborated with the MMFEC for over 10 years as we have grown into a company large enough to have our own manufacturing facility and international distribution.

We believe that programs like theirs are essential to being able to grow local food manufacturing in the state of Montana, among other things. The businesses that grow out of it in turn become employers and contribute to the local economy and tax base. Developing our local food processors also keeps more money in our local economy and increases food security. We sincerely encourage you and your fellow legislators to give your full support and funding to this worthwhile program.



Varada Veum

Yours truly,
Varada Veum, Bipin Patel and Mark Lannen

Tipu's Chai, Inc.

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